

**The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous
80 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052
973-736-1800
www.jfr.org**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Joshua Steinreich
Steinreich Communications
(212) 491-1600
jsteinreich@scompr.com

**PERSONAL STORY OF SURVIVAL CAPTIVATES 230 PARTICIPANTS IN JCC OF
MIDDLESEX COUNTY & JEWISH FOUNDATION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS YOM
HASHOAH EVENT**

EDISON, New Jersey – Alan and Stephanie Bonder, speaking on behalf of The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR), captivated an audience of 230 people at Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Middlesex County’s Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, program.

The Bonders’ presentation focused on Alan’s late father’s wartime story, how as a 13-year-old, Joseph Bonder and his sister Joan managed a harrowing escape from the Skalat ghetto to the village of Ostra Mogila, Poland, where Joan had worked as a teacher. There, they connected with Joan’s former student Bronislaw Firuta, a boy of 14, whose family hid the young siblings from the fall of 1942 through 1944. If discovered by the Nazis, the punishment for this monumental act of courageousness would have led to certain death for all members of the Firuta household, the known penalty for the crime of hiding a Jew in Eastern Europe.

When it eventually became too dangerous for the Bonders to continue hiding in the home, they made their way into the nearby woods where they met up with a group of partisans. The young Firuta would once again distinguish himself, providing support to the partisan group in general and the Bonders in specific. After the war’s end, in 1948, the Bonders, orphans who had lost their entire family, emigrated to the United States, building their lives and families. Joan passed in 1991, and Joseph in 2020.

In 2009, the JFR provided Bonder, his family and his sister’s descendants with the opportunity to finally express their gratitude in person. Following their more than 60-year separation, the non-profit coordinated an emotional reunion between the Bonders and Bronislaw

2022 YOM HASHOAH

TAKE-2-2-2-2-2

Firuta at JFK airport. The JFR captured key moments for its award-winning documentary, “Village on the Rock”, which was screened at the event.

“As bystanders watched their Jewish neighbors being rounded up for slaughter during the Holocaust, a majority chose to remain indifferent to what was happening around them.” said JFR Executive Vice President Stanlee Stahl. “The courage demonstrated by the Firuta family at the risk to their own lives is unfathomable, and it elevates what is otherwise only a period of darkness and despair in our people’s history. Alan Bondar’s mere presence at this event was a testament to the outcome from this courageous act of heroism, and we have an obligation to the Firutas and all the other righteous gentiles to preserve their legacies by telling their stories.”

The JFR continues its work of providing monthly financial assistance to more than 130 aged and needy Righteous Gentiles, living in 14 countries. Since its founding, the JFR has provided more than \$42 million to aged and needy rescuers – helping to repay a debt of gratitude on behalf of the Jewish people to these noble men and women. Its Holocaust teacher education program has become a standard for teaching the history of the Holocaust and educating teachers and students about the significance of the Righteous as moral and ethical exemplars. For more information, visit <https://www.jfr.org/>.